REMARKS

Claim Amendments

Applicants have amended claims 1, 7, and 18. Claims 12 and 13 are also amended to correct their formalities. Claim 4 is cancelled.

The amendment in claim 1 is supported in the specification. For example, the first paragraph on page 9 teaches:

> "The first region of the antisense molecule of the invention is insufficiently long to provide stable binding by itself. Such a sequence is preferably between 3 and 18, preferably between 5 and 12 and advantageously between 7 and 10 bases in length."

The amendment in claim 7 is supported in the specification, e.g., on page 7. For example, lines 10-12 on page 17 teaches:

> "The aim is to render the second region/target hybrid more stable than the second region in its masked state, thus thermodynamically favouring the formation of the hybrid."

Claim 18 is amended to correct the formality error of lacking antecedent basis.

No new matter is added.

Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. 112, Second Paragraph

Claims 1-18 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 112, second paragraph, for alleged indefiniteness. Claim 1, 15, 16 and 17 are rejected for their recitation of the term "stable hybrid." The Office Action states that this is a relative term and the specification provides no basis for the determination of what would be considered a stable hybrid in the context of the instant invention.

Applicants have amended claim 1 as above. The amended claim 1 no longer recites the phrase "stable hybrid." The amendment is supported in the specification, as discussed above.

Claim 7 is rejected for its recitation of the phrase "becomes energetically favourable."

Applicants have amended claim 7 to recite "said unmasked second region thermodynamically favours the formation of a hybrid with said target nucleic acid than when it is masked" instead. The amendment is supported in the specification, as discussed above. The term "thermodynamically favours," as used in the claim, is well known in the art.

Claim 18 is rejected for lack of antecedent basis for its recitation of "in said target or non-target nucleic acid."

Applicants have amended claim 18 to correct this formality error.

Applicants, therefore, respectfully request the reconsideration and withdrawal of the indefiniteness rejections over claims 1-18.

Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. 102(b)

Claims 1-18 are rejected under 35 U.S. C. 102(b) as alleged being anticipated by Agrawal et al. The Office Action states that the ribozyme of Agrawal contains two regions targeting the same target which meets the requirement of claim 1 (e.g., in Figure 7 of Agrawal et al.), therefore anticipates claim 1 and its dependent claims 2-18.

Applicants respectfully disagree.

Applicants submit that claim 1, as amended, recites the limitation that "said first region [of the antisense nucleic acid molecule] is between 7 and 10 nucleotides in length." Agrawal et al. does not teach a nucleic acid molecule containing a first region and a second region, both of which are complementary to a target nucleic acid molecule, *wherein said first region is between 7 and 10 nucleotides in length*. As such, Agrawal et al. does not anticipate claim 1, or its dependent claims 2-3 and 5-18, of the present invention.

Applicants respectfully request the reconsideration and withdrawal of the 102(b) rejections over claims 1-3 and 5-18.

Claims 1-3 and 5-18 are currently pending in the application. Claim 4 is cancelled. Claims 1, 7, 12-13, and 18 are currently amended. The amendments find support in the specification and are discussed in the relevant sections above. No new matter is added.

Applicants submit that in view of the foregoing remarks, all issues relevant to patentability raised in the Office Action have been addressed. Applicants respectfully request the withdrawal of rejections over the claims of the present invention.

Respectfully submitted,

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